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ASSESSMENTS SHOW NEED FOR HIGH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT ACT, ITED scores show limited progress on achievement gaps

(DES MOINES, IA) – August 16, 2005 – State college prep test scores released today by ACT confirm data from Iowa Testing Programs that show more improvement is needed in high school achievement.

While the ACT and Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED) scores both remained relatively strong overall, significant achievement gaps continue and must be addressed, said Iowa Department of Education Director Judy Jeffrey.

“We are pleased that Iowa student achievement continues to rank very high in the nation,” said Jeffrey. “Although our minority student scores also outpace the national average, they remain below the average of White students. Many districts have begun intervention efforts at the high school level, including raising graduation requirements and efforts to assist struggling learners,” she continued. “The state will also continue its technical assistance and support to assure districts have the resources they need to help students set and reach high achievement goals.”

Jeffrey emphasized that careers and jobs of the future will require a higher level of skill as well as a greater degree of flexibility, awareness of and adaptation to technology, and communication skills. Workers also will face more competition for jobs in the future because advances such as the Internet effectively eliminate geographical barriers to employment opportunities.

“Our economic futures are changing and our schools must meet the challenges ahead,” said Jeffrey. “Every school must reach out to more students, help each one understand not just the realities of their future, but more importantly provide them the skills so they can be successful in it.”

Classroom teachers are the key to reaching this higher level of expectation and achievement, Jeffrey said. “Iowa teachers also rate very high nationally, but we need to invest in high quality professional development for them to continually update their instructional strategies,

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giving them the tools and capacity to reach each student and work toward higher skill development.”

Real and meaningful improvement takes time and careful planning and implementation, said Jeffrey. “Our fourth grade achievement data shows that good interventions do work, professional development is effective,” she said. “I’m confident that we’ll see similar improvement when those strategies are applied to high school students.”

ITED AND ACT RESULTS

| | 2003-05 ITED Gr. 11 READING % PROFICIENT¹ | 2003-05 ITED Gr. 11 MATH % PROFICIENT | 2005 ACT COMPOSITE² | |
|------------------|---|--|---|---------------|
| | | | Iowa | Nation |
| All Students | 77.0 | 78.4 | 22.0 | 20.9 |
| | | | | |
| African American | 51.4 | 45.4 | 17.9 | 17.0 |
| American Indian | 62.1 | 61.6 | 19.9 | 18.7 |
| Caucasian/White | 78.7 | 80.6 | 22.2 | 21.9 |
| Hispanic | 50.2 | 51.8 | 20.0 | 18.6 |
| Asian American | 75.8 | 78.8 | 21.9 | 22.1 |
| Other | NA | NA | 22.1 | 20.9 |

1. Based upon the 2003-04 and 2004-05 biennium period using the results from the Iowa Tests of Educational Development.
2. Results are for the graduating class of 2005. ACT is scored on a scale of 1 to 36, with 36 being the highest possible score.